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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

RIGHT of PATRONAGE.

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CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

RIGHT of PATRONAGE.

IT is propoſed, in the following pages, to conſider the Right of Patronage as at preſent eſtabliſhed and exerciſed in Scotland, entirely in a prudential and political point of view; and to inquire with impartiality, freedom, and temper, Whether it be conſiſtent with the intereſt of the country, the crown, and the clergy?

All men, without exception, are ſubject to a variety of diſtreſſes; though *the many* who are *poor* ſuffer much more than *the few* who are *rich*, hard labour and want having fallen to their portion, and therefore they have peculiar temptations to murmur, and repine at the condition of humanity.

Such being the circumſtances of men, it is natural for them all to liſten with attention and eagerneſs to religion, which promiſes them, on certain conditions, endleſs felicity in a future ſtate: But, generally ſpeaking, religion meets

meets with a much better reception from the poor than from the rich. The poor cloſe with it cordially, and no wonder, as nothing can have a greater tendency to ſoothe and ſolace thoſe who ſtoop under the preſſure of fatigue, penury, and perhaps oppreſſion, than aſſurances that in another world, a very different diſtribution of things will take place. But the rich, (too frequently), from diſlike to the conditions, or diſbelief of the doctrines of religion, do not rank themſelves among its votaries. It would be needleſs to enlarge more upon this difference between the rich and the poor, as its reality cannot be diſputed either by the men of the world or by the religious; not by the former, becauſe daily experience diſplays it; and not by the latter, becauſe numberleſs texts of ſcripture hold it forth. And the reader will be pleaſed to mark well this difference, becauſe it is the baſis on which great part of the argument in the ſequel will be reſted.

On conſidering what has been above-hinted, it will be obvious that religion ought to be reckoned an object of great conſequence to thoſe who have the government of mankind: For, as the impreſſions it makes are moſt forcible and powerful, if the people whom it actuates take a wrong turn, the ſtate may be endangered or overthrown; whereas ſociety may reap much benefit from it, when properly directed.

rected. For, 1ſt, it reconciles the bulk of mankind to the inequality and hardſhips to which they are ſubjected from the imperfection of political inſtitutions; and 2dly, it has a good effect upon their morals, and ſupplies the defects of human laws. This has been denied by ſome ingenious and impious authors; but a very ſlight obſervation of mankind will refute them. Of what prodigious uſe to Society is one ſingle effect of religion; viz. the ſacred regard to an oath? without which it is evident, that juſtice would often be diſappointed, both in civil and criminal caſes: For experience ſhews, that people will deliberately and judicially aver falſehoods, to which however they will not depoſe.

What has been above ſuggeſted, with what will further readily occur to the reader *, will, it is thought, evince, that the end which a ſtateſman ſhould aim at in countenancing religion, and eſtabliſhing a ſet of men to explain and inculcate its doctrines, is *the comfort and inſtruction of the common people.*

It is not material to inquire whether the right of patronage owes its birth to the uſurpation of laymen or the policy of prieſts, in

* "Il ne faut pas toujours tellement épuiſer un ſujet "qu'on ne laiſſe rien à faire au Lecteur. Il ne s'agit "pas de faire lire, mais de faire penſer." *De l'eſprit des loix, liv.* xi. *c.* 20.

order

order to encourage the erection and endowment of churches. He who built or doted a church muſt have done ſo from a pious intention, and therefore there could be no danger in allowing him to name the perſon who ſhould officiate in it; becauſe it never could happen that the religious donor would counteract by the ſettlement of a miniſter, the ends which he muſt have had in view, in erecting a church. But then ſuch privilege ſhould have been, as lawyers ſpeak, perſonal and untransmiſſible: For it is apparent, that ſoon as it was allowed to deſcend to heirs by ſucceſſion, or be transferred by voluntary or legal alienation, it would come into the hands of perſons, who being deſtitute of the piety of the original founder, would have no other end in view, but the proviſion of a friend or dependent; and, in fact, that ſuch is the end which patrons commonly now have and always had in view, is undeniable.

At the ſame time it merits particular obſervation, that in countries where a religion prevails, in which there is a hierarchy, much external ſhow and ceremony, and above all ſet forms almoſt on every occaſion, the clergy have to exerciſe their function, patronages never can be ſo abuſed, nor conſequently become ſo great a grievance, as in this country, the religion of which admits of no hierarchy, little

little or no ſhow and ceremony, and no ſet forms whatever. In Popiſh countries, and even in England, the ſermon is the moſt inconſiderable part of the ſervice. In Scotland it is the chief. In Popiſh countries, and even in England, the clergyman has his duty preſcribed to him by ſet forms, according to which he muſt pray, marry, baptiſe, &c. but in this country he is confined by no form, conſequently much more depends upon his perſonal abilities, and therefore there is infinitely more room for a *delectus perſonae* in this country, where preſbytery is eſtabliſhed, than in the countries where Popery or Epiſcopacy prevails.

Accordingly the Preſbyterian religion, and all the eccleſiaſtical forms and ſteps of procedure in ſettling a miniſter obſerved at this day, plainly ſuppoſe and declare that the miniſter to be ſettled is the choice of the people in the pariſh, for whoſe benefit he is intended, and theſe forms, though quite inconſiſtent with the preſent method of ſettlement, in virtue of preſentations, are ſtill kept up and gone through on every occaſion; particularly a call muſt be moderated, as the phraſe is, and ſuſtained before the ſettlement can proceed *, though

* The ſtyle of a call runs as follows: "We the "heritors, elders, and magiſtrates, of the town-"council

though perhaps ſubſcribed by nobody but the exciſeman of the pariſh, or the patron's factor or gardener; while, at the ſame time, all the people in the pariſh, high and low, rich and poor, heritors, elders, and heads of families, have to a man entered their diſapprobation, and diſſent, That a paper ſubſcribed by an exciſeman, the patron's factor, or even by two or three non-reſiding heritors, ſhould be called a Call, when all the reſiding heritors, elders, and heads of families, have declared their averſion and diſlike to the preſentee, is ſurely a ſtrange abuſe of language, and to find it a Call, and ſuſtain it as ſuch, is ſurely a great abuſe of judicial power.

" council of (if to a burgh)
" being deſtitute of a fixed paſtor, and being moſt
" aſſured by good information, and *our own expe-*
" *rience* of the *miniſterial abilities*, piety, literature,
" and prudence, as alſo of the *ſuitableneſs to our ca-*
" *pacities* of the gifts of you Mr. A. B. preacher of
" the goſpel, or miniſter at C. have agreed, *with*
" *the advice and conſent of the pariſhioners* foreſaid,
" and concurrence of the Reverend Preſbytery of
" D. to invite, call, and entreat; likeas, we, by
" theſe preſents, do heartily invite, call, and en-
" treat you, to undertake the office of a paſtor a-
" mong us, and the charge of our ſouls: And fur-
" ther, upon your accepting of this our call, pro-
" miſe you all dutiful reſpect, encouragement, and
" obedience, &c." See Stewart's collections, Tit. 1. where alſo the other ſteps of procedure are ſet forth.

It

It is plain therefore to common ſenſe, that the right of patronage is incompatible with the Preſbyterian religion. One or other of them muſt yield, for by endeavouring to keep up both, we run into much abſurdity, contradiction, and indecency.

From what has been argued above, it ſeems to follow, that the end of ſettling a miniſter in a pariſh, which is the comfort and inſtruction of the common people, cannot be attained, if an unlimited exerciſe of the right of patronage is allowed: Becauſe, for the moſt part, patrons will not have that end in view, but the proviſion of a friend or dependent. In fact, it is found that the preſent method of ſettlement does not anſwer the end. If a late calculation be right, 120,000 of the people of this country have left the eſtabliſhed church; and, it cannot be denied, chiefly on account of patronages. A Preſbytery of Relief, as it is juſtly called, has made its appearance, and carries off vaſt numbers even of our more moderate people, becauſe it differs only from the eſtabliſhed church as to patronages; and, with regard to them, the practice of the eſtabliſhed church is obviouſly abſurd, inconſiſtent, and unjuſtifiable. Every time the right of patronage is improperly exerciſed, it is certain that more of the people of this country will take refuge with that preſbytery, which threatens to be the moſt formidable enemy

the eſtabliſhed church ever ſaw, as it muſt very ſoon ingroſs all the ſerious people of Scotland.

It has been often ſaid by the advocates for patronages, that the Seceders would loſe their ground, and our people would tire of leaving the eſtabliſhed church.

But it was never reaſonable to expect this, ſince patronages are abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Preſbyterian Religion. Thoſe commonly called Seceders, have ſplit among themſelves, yet there is no reaſon for ſaying they have loſt ground; and now that the Preſbytery of Relief has got up, which differs from the eſtabliſhed church in nothing but this ſingle point, there is no reaſon to doubt that the defection from the eſtabliſhed church will grow ſtronger and ſtronger every day, as patronages are inconſiſtent with the Preſbyterian Religion, and as the common people of this country are very much addicted to that religion. And there is no arguing againſt the fact, which is, that, within theſe two or three years, ſo far from tiring of leaving the eſtabliſhed church, the people in this country have been quitting it in ſhoals, and muſt continue to do ſo, unleſs cauſes ſhall fail to produce their uſual effects.

It has been often urged by the advocates for

for patronages, that if the church beſtowed proper care and attention in licenſing and ordaining young men, there could be no room for complaint; as, then, it would not be in the power of a patron to abuſe his right by preſenting an improper perſon.

But it would ſeem obvious, that thoſe who can ſeriouſly uſe, or be much influenced by this argument, have very little knowledge of the world, as it is evident, that in every profeſſion which is numerous, many muſt be admitted, though not properly qualified. No man would chuſe to truſt his cauſe to every lawyer, or his life to every phyſician, that has been admitted into the faculty. And it is not reaſonable to expect more perfection in this reſpect in divinity, than in law or phyſic; beſides it is to be obſerved, that different pariſhes require different paſtors: So that a patron may abuſe his right by preſenting a perſon every way well qualified for one place, to another in different circumſtances.

Fraxinus in ſylvis pulcherrima pinus in hortis,
Populus in fluviis, abies in montibus altis.

Here it will be proper to obſerve, that tho' the right of patronage muſt always be inconſiſtent with, and grievous to preſbytery, yet it has been rendered more intolerably ſo of

late, by the great change in the ſtile, manners, ſentiments, and ſermons of the clergy. They are no doubt now more learned, more philoſophic, and more celebrated in the republic of letters, than they were half a century ago; but it does not therefore follow, that they are more adapted to comfort and inſtruct the common people. The conſequence naturally to be expected from the alteration, was, that they would not incline to preach on ſubjects agreeable to the people, or in a ſtile ſuitable to their capacities, nor conform themſelves in their deportment to that ſtrictneſs and auſterity of life, which the notions of the common people exact. Accordingly, this is juſt what has happened; and, on that account, moſt of the younger clergy have been peculiarly diſagreeable to the people for ſome time paſt, and moſt of the *violent ſettlements*, as they are properly called, have been owing to the right of patronage being exerciſed in favour of clergymen of that claſs. At the ſame time, the younger clergy, imagining they were unable to gain the good graces of the people, and that they would never obtain benefices, if the choice of their miniſters was left to the people, have exerted themſelves to the utmoſt in ſupport of patronages, and raiſed an outcry againſt the people as extravagant and unreaſonable. This cry for a conſiderable time made great impreſſion on many of the

landed

landed intereſt, as well as on moſt of the ruling-elders who attend the General Aſſembly; and therefore they, for ſome time, threw their weight into the ſcale againſt the people. However, it is believed that the greateſt part of theſe reſpectable bodies have at length been undeceived; at leaſt, as to the ruling elders, it is a certain fact, that the ſtrong deciſions * in favour of patrons, by the Aſſembly 1764, were carried through by a majority of miniſters againſt the ruling elders. Nor have the younger clergy ſtopped here, but have carried their zeal for patronages to ſuch a height, as to perſecute ſome of their brethren, who, from a principle of conſcience, would not concur with them in enforcing preſentations.

The ſum of what has been above ſubmitted, which it will not be improper here to recollect, is, that religion is of advantage to the ſtate; that the end of ſettling miniſters in pariſhes is the comfort and inſtruction of the common people; that this end, ſo far from being accompliſhed, has, on the contrary, been fruſtrated by the right of patronage: That this has obliged great numbers of our people to abandon the eſtabliſhed church, and will in time withdraw from it all thoſe who have any regard for religion; the con-

* In the caſes of the Shotts and Glaſgow.

ſequences

ſequences of which, it is apparent, muſt be attended with very diſagreeable effects: Which leads to conſider the right of patronage (as propoſed in the entry) with regard to the country, the crown, and the clergy.

As to the country, what advantage ariſes to it from the right of patronage, is not very obvious; but the diſadvantage and loſs which it occaſions is ſtriking: For,

1*ſt*, It is palpably a great patrimonial loſs to the country to be burdened with the charge of an additional church and miniſter in every pariſh; which, in all probability, it ſoon will be, as there are already two churches and two miniſters in many pariſhes; and the ſame reaſon which has given riſe to thoſe we now ſee, muſt produce the like over all. The maintenance of an additional church and miniſter in a pariſh, runs the tenants and labouring poor into an expence which they are not well able to bear. Accordingly they feel it, and the landholders feel it; and therefore it has become not uncommon, in buying eſtates, to inquire, whether the tenants are Seceders, or attend the eſtabliſhed church?

This expence muſt, for the moſt part, ultimately fall upon the landed intereſt; and therefore, as well as for other reaſons, it ſeems to be plain, that nothing but the greateſt

eſt infatuation or impoſition, could induce them to ſupport the right of patronage by their influence. There is but a very inconſiderable number of landed gentlemen, who have patronages in their perſons, moſt of them are in the crown and royal burrows; what pleaſure then ſhould the landed intereſt take, in ſeeing their tenants and ſervants diſtracted with diviſion and diſturbance, and exhauſted with an unneceſſary expence; and that by a regulation which brings the landed intereſt no additional power or authority, or any advantage whatever but, on the contrary, makes them perfectly inſignificant, and mere ciphers in a matter as to which they certainly ſhould have a great deal to ſay? It may perhaps be obſerved, that the landed gentlemen are very indifferent for their own part what miniſters are ſettled: If ſo, they ſhould never thwart the inclinations of the common people, but endeavour to give them a miniſter as agreeable as poſſible; becauſe then they will promote the end of his ſettlement, *viz.* the advancement of religion, which is both for their intereſt and that of the country in general, on account of its good effects. And if the eſtabliſhed clergy are of no uſe in promoting that end, it ſeems to be indiſputable, that the money laid out in maintaining them is thrown away.

But if the true end of ſettling a miniſter

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in a pariſh is to be neglected, and the ſubſiſtence of a preſentee, though altogether uſeleſs, is only to be regarded as the end of a ſettlement; yet why ſhould not the landed gentlemen have votes in the ſettlement of miniſters, as well as in thoſe of ſchoolmaſters and collectors of the ceſs? Is not the ſtipend of all theſe officers paid by a land-tax out of their eſtates?

2*dly*, The right of patronage, as at preſent exerciſed, has a ſtill worſe effect; becauſe it has a manifeſt tendency to bring religion into contempt with the common people. What can be more ſhockingly abſurd than to ſee a miniſter of the goſpel ſettled by a troop of dragoons? What more diſguſting than to ſee a miniſter of the goſpel, though diſregarded and deſpiſed by every perſon in the pariſh, ſit down contented and comforted, becauſe nevertheleſs he enjoys the manſe, glibe, and ſtipend.

——*Populus me ſibilat at mihi plaudo,*
Ipſe domi nummos ſimul ac contemplor in arca.

The common people are too ſenſible not to draw this concluſion, that the end which patrons and others in power have, is not the advancement of religion, or the comfort and inſtruction of the people, but the ſubſiſtence of a friend or dependent; and that the end which

which the intruding paſtor has in view, is not to tend the flock, but to ſhear the golden fleece. This certainly ſhould be concealed at leaſt from the people as much as poſſible; for if once they perceive it, there is ſome riſque that they may come to be diſguſted at all ſort of religion, and conclude with an impious Italian, lately in this country; who, after being informed of the ſmallneſs of our ſtipends, and comparing them with the great benefices and dignities the Romiſh clergy enjoy, expreſſed himſelf to this purpoſe, *The church of Rome is a great cheat, the church of Scotland a little cheat.*

The only advantage which it is pretended reſults from the right of patronage, is peace and quiet. This might have been alledged perhaps with ſome ſhew, when patronages were at firſt revived; but it is aſtoniſhing it ſhould be ſtill dwelt upon, now that we have had the experience of them for a number of years, during which we have been continually harraſſed with diſturbances, diviſions, and ſchiſms.

It may poſſibly be true, that in Royal Boroughs, where polites and party-rage prevail, before ſettlements took place much pothering and altercation would happen: But does that afford any argument againſt allowing the free choice of the people in general? It might

as well be contended, that the houſe of Commons ſhould be aboliſhed, becauſe elections in burghs often give riſe to much drunkenneſs, coruption, and perjury. The beſt things may be abuſed.

But the allegation, That the election of miniſters by the people would occaſion diſturbance and diſquiet, is redargued by obſervation and experience. There are, it ſeems, 120 ſchiſmatic miniſters juſt now in Scotland, none of whom are ſettled by preſentations, but upon a call or election by the different ſetts of people who have withdrawn from the eſtabliſhed church; yet we never heard of diſſention, not to ſay diſturbance, among them at theſe elections. And though they ſhould differ ſometimes, and come to a vote, yet that would not produce any diviſion, or even a law-ſuit: For mankind are ſenſible, that when a number of people are not agreed, the diſpute muſt be ended by putting the queſtion, and thoſe who are out-numbered cheerfully ſubmit. Thoſe called Seceders have indeed ſplit among themſelves on points of doctrine, and have had two or three law-ſuits before the Court of Seſſion, about the property of churches and miniſters houſes, which they had built when united; but when had they any diſturbance or law-ſuit about the election of a miniſter?

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There are many churches on the eſtabliſhment not ſubject to patronage, and they have been planted for ages without any diſturbance. In North Leith the right of electing the miniſter is, and has been veſted in the *neighbours* and *inhabitants* for two centuries; and yet it is a fact, that, during that very long period, they have never had any diſpute or difference among themſelves about ſupplying a vacancy. Many other inſtances to the ſame purpoſe might be mentioned, but it is unneceſſary, as the fact is as notorious as it is ſtrong, and therefore the cry againſt the turbulence and unreaſonableneſs of the people ſhould be deemed a very great miſrepreſentation.

Before concluing this head, it will not be improper to take notice of another topic on which thoſe gentlemen have much inſiſted; viz. that the people, or rather, as they are commonly called in deriſion, the Chriſtian People, have no ſort of right to chuſe their miniſters, and that the notions they have to the contrary have been inſtilled into them by clergymen over-zealous for religion, or over-anxious for popularity.

To this it is anſwered; 1ſt, That as the end of ſettling a miniſter in a pariſh evidently ought to be the comfort and inſtruction of the people, it is extremely juſt and natural

for them to infer that they have a right to elect him.

2*dly*, It is very wrong to blame any of their miniſters for inſtilling this notion into them. It is the Preſbyterian Religion which inſtills it into them, and every ſtep of eccleſiaſtical form and procedure in the ſettlement of a miniſter muſt confirm and rivet them in it.

3*dly*, The gentlemen who lay ſo much ſtreſs upon the above topic would do well to conſider whether or not the revival of patronages, by the act 12*mo Annæ* be conſiſtent with one of the two eſſential and unalterable articles of the union? By the Scottiſh act for a treaty of union 1705. c. 4. It is, "provided "alſo that the ſaid commiſſioner ſhall not "treat of or concerning any alteration of the "worſhip, diſcipline, and government of the "church of this kingdom, as *now* by law "eſtabliſhed." An act immediately before the Union, 1706, c. 6, after narrating that the treaty had been reported to parliament, and that it was "reaſonable, and neceſſary, "that the true Proteſtant Religion as preſently "profeſſed within this kingdom, with the "worſhip, diſcipline, and government of "this church, ſhould be effectually, and un-"alterably ſecured," does "eſtabliſh and "confirm the ſaid true Proteſtant Religion, "and the worſhip, diſcipline, and govern-

"ment

" ment of this Church, to continue without " any alteration to the people in this land, " through all ſucceeding generations." And immediately after the Union, another act paſſed to the ſame purpoſe; and it further ſtatutes and ordains, " That this act of par- " liament, with the eſtabliſhment therein " contained, ſhall be held and obſerved in all " time coming, as a fundamental and eſſen- " tial condition of any treaty of union to be " concluded betwixt the two kingdoms with- " out any alteration thereof, or derogation " thereto, in any ſort for ever."

There is indeed no expreſs mention of the abolition of patronages by the act 1690; but, is it not evident, both from the words and the ſpirit, that it was underſtood, and intended that the Preſbyterian Religion ſhould be preſerved, unhurt, and inviolate, in every particular, as it was then? Now, ſince the right of patronage, as has been ſhewn above, is inconſiſtent with the Preſbyterian Religion, it ſeems to follow, that the act of Queen Anne, reviving that right, was an infringement of one of the unalterable articles of the Union, and conſequently contrary to law: For it ſurely will not be maintained that an article, declared to be unalterable, may, notwithſtanding, be altered. If it may, then the only other article on the ſame footing muſt go too, and our land-tax be raiſed above 48,000 l.

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This conſideration likewiſe furniſhes a good anſwer to another common topic of declamation in favour of patronages, that they are civil rights conferred by ſpecial act of parliament; but, ſetting aſide this article of the Union, it is plain that this topic can be of no uſe in the argument: For the queſtion is, whether the law be good or bad, ſalutary, or noxious, as it ſurely cannot be maintained, that every act of parliament that paſſes muſt ſtand for ever unrepealed. This ſeems to be a doctrine as little calculated for the times as any that can well be figured.

As to the intereſt of the Crown in this matter, it muſt be acknowledged that it has gained more by the revival of the act of patronages than any other party concerned; for as the greateſt part of the patronages belong to the Crown, and as an addition to the number of offices in the Crown's gift will always be thought for its advantage, it cannot be denied that the Crown has ſeemingly profited by the reſtoration of patronages. At the ſame time, as the rigorous exerciſe of the right of patronage will infallibly drive away all the ſerious people from the Church of Scotland, as that church was certainly firmly attached to our preſent happy eſtabliſhment, and, as it is by no means certain what notions the Seceders and other ſectaries may entertain, or what turn they may take, it may be doubted whether

ther it be for the real intereſt of the Crown to oppoſe the abolition of patronages. In 1745, the Seceders appeared in ſupport of our happy eſtabliſhment, but it is believed they did ſo not becauſe they did not think it bad, but becauſe they thought the other then threatened would be worſe. In 1715, and in 1745, the influence of the eſtabliſhed clergy over their people in ſupport of government was conſpicuous; but now, many of them have loſt all ſort of influence with their people, and in time, if patronages are continued, the whole of them will. This influence muſt paſs to the ſchiſmatic preachers, who, in all probability, will alter their tone, and become troubleſome and turbulent, whenever they find they have the whole, or a great majority, of the people at their back.

Upon this branch of the ſubject, which is ſomewhat delicate, it ſhall only be further obſerved, that a rigorous exerciſe of the right of patronage in the Crown is by no means of a piece with the management of its other rights. The King is always a gracious ſuperiour. Every man chuſes rather to hold of his Majeſty than of a ſubject. Why ſhould not his Majeſty be a gracious patron? And here it would be very improper to paſs over in ſilence a late inſtance of benignity and gentleneſs in the exerciſe of the Royal right of patronage. A vacancy having happened in South Leith, and the Weſt-

Church,

Church, the people in theſe pariſhes preferred a dutiful petition to his Majeſty, repreſenting their earneſt wiſh and deſire, to have the gentlemen who are now their miniſters, ſettled among them, and his Majeſty was graciouſly pleaſed to give ear to their entreaties, and to grant a preſentation accordingly. An exerciſe of the Royal right in this manner would ſurely give much ſatisfaction to all concerned. It may be ſeen from the public news-papers how ſenſible the people were of the favour, and how deſirous to expreſs their gratitude to ſome of the honourable gentlemen in the adminiſtration who happened ſoon after to be in this country.

Were the patronages in the Crown to be always uſed with the ſame benignity and beneficence, that thoſe juſt now mentioned were, and the other Royal rights hitherto have been; how happy would it be for the nation that every patronage in Scotland was veſted in his Majeſty!

As to the clergy; that the right of patronage is diametrically oppoſite to the intereſt of that reſpectable body, ſeems to be a propoſition as plain as any that can well be conceived. The influence of the clergy with the crown, and with the landed-intereſt, depends on their influence with the people. The effect

fect of patronages is to leſſen, nay to annihilate that influence, for as it has already transferred many, ſo it will infallibly in time transfer the whole religious people in Scotland to the ſchiſmatic preachers; when the whole ſhall be transferred, what will become of our clergy then? Do they imagine that the landed gentlemen will maintain clergymen for their own private edification? Do they imagine, the landed gentlemen will continue to pay a heavy land tax, in order to ſupport a number of men that do not ſerve the purpoſe for which they were deſigned, though they be excellent philoſophers, hiſtorians, and poets?

It muſt therefore, at firſt ſight, ſeem amazing and unaccountable, that clergymen, who in no age of the world have been accuſed of inattention to their own intereſt, ſhould deſert the people to whom they owe their riſe and exiſtence, and lend a helping hand to meaſures which muſt bring contempt and ruin upon their order. It ſeems impoſſible to account for the phaenomenon, otherwiſe than from the above-mentioned particular circumſtances of a party among them, which has, for a good many years paſt, had the lead in church-courts. But the intereſt of that party does not conſtitute the intereſt of the body; and even that party would be ſatisfied, patronages are not for their intereſt, would they allow themſelves

to think on this ſubject with the ſame coolneſs and ability they do on others.

In caſe the landed-intereſt and the clergy ſhall apply for, and obtain a variation of this patronage-act, it will require much wiſdom and deliberation to put the election of a miniſter upon a proper footing; for the act 1690 is doubtleſs liable to many ſolid objections. Various opinions have been formed upon this matter, and many ſeem to wiſh that the right of election was lodged with the heritors. That they are entitled to votes is obvious, but if the principles above laid down be juſt, the power of election ſhould not be lodged in them ſolely: For the end of ſettling a miniſter in a pariſh is the comfort and inſtruction, not of the rich, who are commonly underſtood by the word Heritors, but of the poor, that is the tenants, labouring-people, &c.; and therefore it may be juſtly doubted, if that end would be attained, if the right of election was lodged with the former. However, it is needleſs to enlarge upon this at preſent; would it were come to the ſettling a proper plan: For though it would no doubt be difficult, yet it is ridiculous to ſay it would be impoſſible.

In caſe the landed-intereſt and clergy ſhall not apply for, or obtain a variation of the patronage-act, then it will be proper to conſider whether

whether any method can be fallen upon to remedy in part, a grievance that cannot be entirely removed. Poſſibly a good many patronages might be purchaſed by the people. Several patrons, it is reaſonable to think, might be prevailed upon to accept of a good price for their right, and the money requiſite for building a meeting-houſe and ſupporting a miniſter, would ſurely be a ſufficient equivalent. But this ſcheme cannot be of univerſal uſe; for many patrons will not ſell, many cannot; and, in caſe a variation of the patronage-act be refuſed, the only proper relief can come from the patrons, and from the clergy.

Patrons, who are impreſſed with a ſenſe of religion, cannot, conſiſtently with their own principles, abuſe their right; and they would be much confirmed in their good diſpoſitions, by peruſing the laſt chapter of Biſhop Burnet's Treatiſe on the *Paſtoral Care*. From which, by the bye, it appears, that his Lordſhip conſidered the Right of Patronage even in England, as a ſort of grievance.

If there are any patrons, who do not give much attention to religious matters, yet they ſhould reflect, that the good of the country and common humanity, requires, that they ſhould not uſe their right with deſpotic rigour. That the good of the country requires

this, it is hoped, has been already proved; and, that common humanity requires it, they muſt perceive, on thinking for a moment on their own ſituation, and that of the common people. They are gentlemen of fortune, who who live in affluence and eaſe, while the common people ſtruggle with labour and want. It is a common and a juſt ſaying, that, "A merciful man is merciful to his beaſt;" and indeed nothing more certainly denotes a bad heart than unneceſſary cruelty, or even ſeverity to brute animals: But, if we ſhould be merciful to all our fellow-creatures, how much more ſhould we be ſo to our fellow-men. It is undoubtedly the particular duty of thoſe favoured with high ſtation and fortune to compaſſionate the hard fate of the common people, and to ſweeten for them the bitter cup of life a much as poſſible. Thoſe who have not obſerved the common people, cannot eaſily comprehend how much comfort they receive from a miniſter to their liking; but thoſe who are acquainted with them, know it is very great, Now, if a morſel of oat-cake and a draught of milk will go the more pleaſantly down with a poor man, that he is under the miniſtry of a clergyman to his taſte, alas! why ſhould he not be indulged * ?

* *Opprimete i contumaci*
Son gli s'degni allor permeſſi,
Ma infierir contro gli oppreſſi
Queſto è un barbaro piacer.

Metaſt. la Clem. di Tito, A. 1. Sc. 4.

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As to the clergy, they might, if they pleaſed, do a great deal. The rich and the poor do not like the ſame ſort of ſermons; and, for obvious reaſons, it is impoſſible they ſhould. The poor are moſt ready to believe and embrace the doctrines of religion, but the ſplendid good works of virtue, their narrow ſphere does not admit of. What can be more incongruous, than to flouriſh on charity, to a ſet of men, moſt of whom have but 8 d. a-day? Diſcourſes on the vanity of riches, the danger of poſſeſſing them, the myſteries of religion, and the future happineſs of the poor, are thoſe which do, and muſt delight the bulk of mankind. By what art did Mr. Whitefield draw thouſands, and ten thouſands daily to hear him? It was not by declaiming on moral ſubjects. He humbled the rich, and comforted the poor; and whoever will do ſo with tolerable ability, muſt be popular.

To conclude, a variation of the patronage-act is devoutly to be wiſhed, but if that ſhall be refuſed, ſome check, or palliative, at leaſt ſhould be thought of; for it is but too clear, that the procedure at preſent is unjuſt, inhumane, and impolitic.

An opportunity of knowing the particulars of moſt of the violent ſettlements, for theſe

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ten years paſt, gave riſe to theſe reflections; and their publication is owing to nothing but a concern for the people, and good wiſhes to the church of this country; they being by no means intended to ſerve or offend any party whatever.

FINIS.